4/9/71

Gary,

In my haste I fear I misinformed you by underinforming you about the noise reaction in and with Lil. It is not a question of that artificial measure, decibels. It is a question of emotional reaction. She got to be as conditioned as Pavlov's dogs. She knew, when this all started, that each overflight would be costly to us in damaged meat chickens and in lost egg production and damaged hens and pullets, for it followed like the day the night. And the more we tried to stop the overflights, especially after we won the first lawsuit, and the more even the Secretary of Defense tried and couldn't, the more she anguished. It was a terrible futility, a frustration hard to imagibe. If you understand that even when, as happened, the Secretary of Defense ordered the General Counsel of the Defense Department to represent us against the Army, and the damned Army did what it damned pleased, and the hell with the DOD or McNamara, I think you can begin to betx a feeling ~~tkx~~ of the kind of frustrations we had. Lil has acute glaucoma, and her doctor, a former military specialist (Walter Reed) told her the likely precipitating cause of attacks was these tensions and any one could blind her, can you conceive how we both felt, how we both got conditioned?

Other conditions of our life, and all this is in medical-kind confidence, made it worse. We had never been able to have children, and how we tried. I went over the hill regularly when I was in the army and close enough to get home at the right times. Other things, not this, impelled her doctor about 1948 to recommend an exploratory, to which we agreed. We then, when she was under the knife, learned tha t a surgeon enjoying one of the best reps in DC had butchered her miserably during an appendectomy. It took five doctors five hours to straighten her guts out, and they then felt they had to do a hysterectomy. The hot-flash period had not fully ended when these helicopter flights began, and one of the results is that Lil lost interest in just aboht everything, as she drew more and more inward. Her reactions grew to the point where I did not dare let her type notes for me as I prepared for a second trial. One night, the last she did, she had a reaction I'll never forget. I was away at a nutrition conference and when I got home she was ill without physical cause, her temperature and pulse-rate way up while she shivvered so the bed shook. I stayed awake all night, took her to the clinic in the a.m., and while standing in line in the lab for tests she passed out. A neurologists, called in from the floor above immediately, at first thought she was having a stroke....So many thinks like this, and always that damoclean sword of the galucoma. In fact, when we were interrupted furing the conference with the judge because the USAtyy was called out on an emergency and we say in the outer office, she began to weep . If and when this goes to trial, I'll have to have a specialist in attendance.

I am confident this is a less common reaction that is known. As the old psychiatrist I then consulted told me, it was not mental illness to react in the many ways she did, it was a sign of mental health. How can a healthy person live this way without reacting, he asked me? This is why we had to leave the farm. He told me I had to get her far enough away so that it would not always be on her mind. Thus we have the farm empty, a black man living there without paying rent just to prevent vandalism. It is a beautiful location, 20 minutes closer to DC than here, and we could have finished that house for relatively little, but I had to get her away. Anyway, I am trying to encapsulate the possibilities for others in a court victory for us, for it is here that there will be the hangup, in negotiations as in court. I can't imagine Mitchell or Kleindienst agreeing to any decent settlement with me, but I also feel I must make the effort because of the possible effects on Lil if we go to coirt. Even a couple of days of trial will be an indescribable agony to her, a reliving of torture, and I fear it will linger. And if you apply your imagination and your training, you can, perhaps, get a glimmerof what the past 15 years have been for me.

Best,